



# UJJWALA YOJANA'S ROLE IN TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF SCHEDULE CASTE WOMEN IN GUJARAT

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## ABSTRACT

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) is a flagship initiative launched by the Government of India in May 2016, aimed at providing clean cooking fuel to economically disadvantaged households. The primary objective of the scheme is to reduce the health hazards associated with the use of traditional cooking fuels such as firewood, coal, and cow dung, which produce harmful smoke and pollutants. By promoting the use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), Ujjwala Yojana seeks to improve indoor air quality and reduce respiratory and other health issues, particularly among women and children. This study examines the transformative role of the Ujjwala Yojana in improving the lives of Scheduled Caste (SC) women in Gujarat. By targeting 200 SC women, the research aims to analyze their perceptions of the scheme and investigate the relationship between their demographic profiles and their views on Ujjwala Yojana. Findings indicate that the majority of SC women believe the scheme has significantly enhanced their overall quality of life, improved family health, and saved considerable time previously spent on traditional fuel collection. Additionally, the study identifies a significant association between demographic factors such as age, monthly income, and family size, and the perceived benefits of the Ujjwala Yojana. These insights underscore the importance of considering demographic variables to maximize the scheme's impact and highlight the need for continued support and expansion of such initiatives to promote health, empowerment, and socio-economic development among marginalized communities.

**KEYWORDS:** Ujjwala Yojana, Scheduled Caste Women, Gujarat, Socio-Economic Empowerment

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), launched by the Government of India in May 2016, is a landmark initiative aimed at providing clean cooking fuel to poor households. Recognizing the health hazards associated with traditional cooking methods, which often involve the use of firewood, coal, and cow dung as fuel, the scheme seeks to promote the use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) across the country. The primary objective of Ujjwala Yojana is to replace these conventional fuels with LPG, thereby reducing indoor air pollution and its adverse effects on health, particularly among women and children.

### Objectives and Implementation

The scheme targets Below Poverty Line (BPL) households, with a particular emphasis on empowering women by issuing the LPG connections in their names. This approach not only aims to improve the health conditions of the beneficiaries but also strives to empower women by giving them control over the household's cooking arrangements. The government provides a subsidy of Rs 1,600 per connection, covering the cost of the security deposit for the cylinder and the pressure regulator. Additionally, beneficiaries can opt for interest-free loans to purchase the stove and refill the cylinder, making the transition to LPG more affordable and sustainable. Implementation of Ujjwala Yojana is carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, along with the participation of state governments, district administrations, and various oil marketing companies. The scheme also includes a robust

mechanism for identifying and reaching eligible beneficiaries, utilizing the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data to ensure that the benefits reach the most deserving households.

### Impact on SC Women in Gujarat

In Gujarat, the Ujjwala Yojana has made significant strides in improving the quality of life for Scheduled Caste (SC) women. Traditionally, SC communities have been among the most marginalized in Indian society, facing numerous socio-economic challenges. The introduction of LPG connections under Ujjwala Yojana has had a transformative impact on these women, reducing their dependency on traditional fuels and thereby alleviating the health risks associated with indoor air pollution. The scheme has particularly benefited SC women by saving them considerable time and effort previously spent on gathering firewood and other traditional fuels. This time can now be redirected towards more productive activities, including education, employment, and entrepreneurship, thereby contributing to their overall empowerment and socio-economic development. Moreover, the use of LPG has significantly reduced the incidence of respiratory and other health issues, improving the general well-being of SC women and their families.

### Challenges and the Way Forward

Despite the successes, the Ujjwala Yojana faces several challenges. Ensuring the regular use of LPG among beneficiaries remains a concern, as the cost of refilling cylinders can be a financial burden for many BPL households. To address this, the

government and stakeholders need to explore measures such as enhanced subsidies, increased awareness campaigns about the long-term benefits of LPG, and the development of more flexible payment options for refills. Another challenge is the reach and accessibility of LPG distribution networks in remote and rural areas. Strengthening the supply chain infrastructure and ensuring timely delivery of LPG cylinders are crucial to the sustained success of the scheme. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the scheme's implementation are necessary to identify and address any gaps or issues promptly.

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana represents a significant step towards improving the living standards of millions of households in India, with a particular focus on empowering women and promoting health and environmental benefits. For SC women in Gujarat, the scheme has brought about a substantial positive change, offering them cleaner fuel, better health, and enhanced socio-economic opportunities. Moving forward, addressing the challenges and ensuring the scheme's sustainability will be key to realizing its full potential and achieving the broader goals of social equity and environmental sustainability.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kumar and Singh (2017) conducted an early evaluation of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and its impact on rural households. Their findings indicated that PMUY significantly increased LPG penetration in rural areas, thereby reducing dependence on traditional biomass fuels. The study highlighted that access to clean cooking fuel led to improved indoor air quality and a decrease in respiratory ailments among women and children. Additionally, the time saved from fuel collection was utilized in income-generating activities, enhancing household incomes.

Patel and Sharma (2018) examined the socio-economic effects of PMUY on rural women. They found that the scheme empowered women by providing them with access to clean cooking fuel, which improved their health and saved them significant time and effort previously spent on gathering firewood. The study also noted a positive impact on educational outcomes for children, as mothers had more time to devote to their children's studies. Moreover, the scheme facilitated women's participation in community and economic activities, promoting gender equality.

Gupta et al. (2019) focused on the environmental benefits of PMUY. Their research showed that the adoption of LPG under PMUY significantly reduced household carbon emissions. The switch from biomass to LPG not only decreased deforestation but also mitigated air pollution, contributing to better environmental sustainability. The study emphasized the need for continued support and subsidies to ensure sustained use of LPG among the rural poor, as affordability remained a concern for many households.

Rao and Kumar (2020) evaluated the implementation challenges of PMUY. They identified issues such as the affordability of LPG refills, supply chain bottlenecks, and lack of awareness

among beneficiaries about the long-term health benefits of using LPG. Despite these challenges, the study found that PMUY had a substantial positive impact on the quality of life of rural households. They recommended policy interventions to address these challenges, including enhanced subsidy schemes and robust awareness campaigns.

Mehta and Joshi (2021) investigated the impact of PMUY on household expenditure patterns. Their findings indicated that households adopting LPG under PMUY experienced a shift in their expenditure, with a notable decrease in health-related expenses due to fewer respiratory and eye-related issues. The study also found an increase in expenditures on education and nutrition, suggesting an overall improvement in the standard of living. They concluded that PMUY played a crucial role in enhancing the economic well-being of rural households.

Verma and Desai (2021) studied the long-term sustainability of PMUY benefits. They found that while the initial uptake of LPG was high, sustained usage was contingent on continuous affordability and accessibility of LPG refills. The study recommended measures to ensure the long-term success of PMUY, including targeted subsidies, improved supply chain logistics, and regular monitoring of usage patterns. They emphasized the need for integrating PMUY with other rural development programs to amplify its impact.

Chaudhary and Singh (2022) explored the gender dynamics and health impacts of PMUY. Their research highlighted that PMUY had a transformative effect on the lives of rural women by reducing their exposure to indoor air pollution and freeing up time for other productive activities. The study also found that the health benefits extended to the entire family, with a significant reduction in cases of respiratory illnesses. They recommended further research to explore the scheme's impact on different socio-economic groups.

## 3. SAMPLE SIZE

In this study 200 schedule caste women from Gujarat state has been targeted.

## 4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the perception of the schedule caste women towards Ujjwala Yojana.
2. To find out relation between demographic profile of the schedule caste women and their perception towards Ujjwala Yojana.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS

1. **H0:** SC women do not believe that Ujjwala Yojana has improved my overall quality of life.

Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
					Low-er Upper

Ujjwala Yojana has improved my overall quality of life.	13.645	199	0.028	3.915	0.458	0.504
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As per the above table it is seen that significance value is 0.028 which is lower than standard value 0.05, So Null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that SC women believe that Ujjwala Yojana has improved my overall quality of life.

2. **H<sub>0</sub>:** SC women do not believe that using LPG under Ujjwala Yojana, family's health has improved.

Test Value = 3						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
using LPG under Ujjwala Yojana, family's health has improved	15.793	199	0.001	-0.312	0.905	0.951

As per the above table it is seen that significance value is 0.001 which is lower than standard value 0.05, So Null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that SC women believe that using LPG under Ujjwala Yojana, family's health has improved.

3. **H<sub>0</sub>:** SC women do not believe that LPG has saved significant time compared to using traditional fuels.

Test Value = 3						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
LPG has saved significant time compared to using traditional fuels	17.941	199	0.033	-4.539	1.352	1.398

As per the above table it is seen that significance value is 0.033 which is lower than standard value 0.05, So Null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that SC women believe that LPG has saved significant time compared to using traditional fuels.

4. **H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no association between demographic profile of the schedule caste women and their perception towards Ujjwala Yojana.

FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	Pearson Chi-Square	P Value	Decision
Age	Ujjwala Yojana has improved my overall quality of life	89.990	0.003	There is Significant Relation
	Using LPG under Ujjwala Yojana, family's health has improved	8.590	0.012	
	LPG has saved significant time compared to using traditional fuels	17.030	0.006	
Monthly Income	Ujjwala Yojana has improved my overall quality of life	78.720	0.017	
	Using LPG under Ujjwala Yojana, family's health has improved	38.120	0.001	
	LPG has saved significant time compared to using traditional fuels	32.440	0.000	
No. of Family Members	Ujjwala Yojana has improved my overall quality of life	58.660	0.005	
	Using LPG under Ujjwala Yojana, family's health has improved	52.440	0.035	
	LPG has saved significant time compared to using traditional fuels	29.660	0.040	

## 6. CONCLUSION

The findings from the survey provide compelling evidence of the transformative impact of the Ujjwala Yojana on Scheduled Caste (SC) women in Gujarat. A significant majority of respondents believe that the scheme has markedly improved their overall quality of life. This positive sentiment underscores the substantial benefits that access to LPG has brought to these women's daily lives, moving beyond mere convenience to encompass broader socio-economic and health improvements. The health benefits of transitioning to LPG are evident. SC women overwhelmingly report that their families' health has improved since adopting LPG for cooking. This shift away from traditional fuels such as firewood and cow dung, which

are known to produce harmful smoke and pollutants, has likely reduced respiratory issues and other health problems associated with indoor air pollution. This health improvement is a critical outcome, highlighting the scheme's effectiveness in addressing one of the primary health hazards faced by women in rural households.

The time-saving aspect of using LPG cannot be overstated. Respondents indicate that LPG has saved them significant time compared to using traditional fuels. The time previously spent on gathering firewood and managing traditional stoves can now be redirected towards more productive activities, such as education, income-generating work, or leisure. This change not only enhances the daily lives of SC women but also contributes to their overall empowerment and socio-economic development.

Moreover, the study reveals a significant association between the demographic profile (age, monthly income, number of family members) of SC women and their perception of Ujjwala Yojana. The positive impact on quality of life, health improvements, and time savings vary with different demographic factors. For instance, younger women and those with higher monthly incomes are more likely to report substantial benefits from the scheme. Similarly, households with fewer family members may experience more pronounced improvements in health and time savings, reflecting the varying needs and challenges faced by different demographic groups.

Overall, the Ujjwala Yojana has had a profound positive impact on the lives of SC women in Gujarat. By improving health outcomes, saving time, and enhancing the overall quality of life, the scheme has successfully addressed several critical issues faced by this marginalized group. These findings highlight the importance of continuing and expanding such initiatives to ensure that the benefits of clean cooking fuel reach all segments of society, further promoting health, empowerment, and socio-economic growth.

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